

have thrived in this state, creating an autumn tradition as popular as gridiron rivalries and the World Series for many. Long-time locals still talk of Depression-era days when they flushed rising clouds of ringnecks from weed patches to feed their families through the long winter ahead. It was about the same time affluent sportsmen from around the world began coming to the prairies to experience the incredible sport.

But as with much of America's wildlife, South Dakota's pheasant population has risen and fallen at the whims of Mother Nature. Worse yet, it suffered at the hands of modern agriculture, which steadily replaced needed nesting and winter cover with sprawling inland seas of corn and wheat. But the tide has turned. South Dakota's pheasant hunting has been nothing short of phenomenal lately.

"Thanks to several things—mild winters, the cover of the Conservation Reserve Program, and private habitat programs—our pheasant population has been incredible the last few years," said Paul Nelson, president of Paul Nelson Farm, the Gettysburg outfitter who hosted the hunters mentioned above. "Most of our guests have simply never seen anything like it, or compare it to the glory days of the 1950s. It's not uncommon for our guests to flush 200 pheasants from just one field."

Not surprisingly, the mind-boggling bird numbers have again brought sportsmen from around the world to the place where pheasants outnumber people many, many times over. "Pheasant hunting is really, really big in South Dakota. People come from all over the world," said Mark Kayser, outdoor promotions manager, South Dakota Department of Tourism. "We estimate we had 100,000 hunters afield on opening day. A lot of them have been coming for years. It's like a homecoming for them."

According to Mr. Kayser, the visiting hunters come from all walks of life. Air strips are lined with private jets, and parking lots hold everything from new Suburbans to rusted old pickup campers that seem to spew low-income sportsmen like clowns from a tiny circus car.

But no matter how they arrive, the visiting sportsmen are spending much-needed money in pursuit of South Dakota's state bird. "Our Game, Fish and Parks Department estimated that pheasant hunting adds about \$55 million to the South Dakota economy," said Mr. Kayser, a lifelong resident and avid sportsman. "Some think that's on the conservative side. But there's no question that it's very big for a lot of small-town economies that are otherwise just dependent on agriculture."

So it appeared during a recent trek through the central part of the state. Every convenience store held a full selection of ammo, orange hats, gloves and licenses. Signs advertising church-sponsored dinners and bird-cleaning services were as common as mile markers on some highways.

Accommodations ranged from tents, back bedrooms in the homes of landowners who allow hunters to roam their land and bunk for a nominal fee. In recent years a number of businesses have blossomed that cater to sportsmen who want the *creme de la creme* of wingshooting action and worldly accommodations, such as Mr. Nelson's legendary establishment.

Picked up in a nearby Pierre, guests are taken along a back-road maze that soon places them at the huge lodge that features a country opulence and is rated among the best in the nation. Served by a hand-picked staff from across the state, Mr. Nelson's guests feast on five-star cuisine as they talk business or simply relax.

But there is no time for total relaxation when taken afield by Mr. Nelson's guides and

dogs. Proof that agriculture and wildlife can coexist, Paul Nelson Farm's thousands of acres spew birds like bees from a shaken hive. The wingshooting is indeed so good that Mr. Nelson had to seek special regulation that allows gunners to take more than the state-regulated three-bird-per-day limit.

Still, the action is hot enough that most guests are back at the lodge by late afternoon, where they can bang a round of sporting clays or simply sit quietly on a balcony, favored drink in hand as they watch scores of gaudy cockbirds sail into a small sanctuary just yards from the lodge. Mr. Nelson reports that few who depart fail to leave a deposit for another all-inclusive hunt, which will cost around \$2,000 for three days.

After a morning at Mr. Nelson's, I joined Bob Tinker, of Tinker Kennels, near his home in Pierre. Walking upland prairie pastures toward endless horizons, we followed his stylish English setters as they found, pointed and retrieved prairie chickens and sharptail grouse.

The next morning I traded walking boots for waders and made a predawn trudge into a marsh that actually smelled of ducks with Mike Moody, a guide from Herrick. The first flock of mallards that passed over our decoys was easily 100 yards from first duck to last. Never were there not ducks in the air. Totally addicted, I was with Mr. Moody the following morning for another incredible day. At one point some 200 beautiful mallards landed amid our decoys, like leaves cascading from an autumn maple.

As we walked from the marsh at mid-morning, bags of decoys on our backs and limits of tasty ducks in our hands, I learned the best duck hunt of my life could be just the beginning. "A lot of times we'll take our ducks, then walk the C.R.P. [Conservation Reserve Program grasses] for pheasants in the afternoon," said Mr. Moody. "And if the geese are in and you fill out on pheasants in time, you could even . . ."

HONORING THE JACKSON'S FOR CELEBRATING THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, these are trying times for the family in America. Unfortunately, too many broken homes have become part of our national culture. It is tragic that nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce. The effects of divorce on families and particularly the children of broken families are devastating. In such an era, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "til death us do part" seriously and have successfully demonstrated the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity, to build a strong family. These qualities make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Woodrow and Billie Dove Jackson who on February 23 celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The Jackson's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

HONORING THE LETTMAN'S FOR CELEBRATING THEIR 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, these are trying times for the family in America. Unfortunately, too many broken homes have become part of our national culture. It is tragic that nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce. The effects of divorce on families and particularly the children of broken families are devastating. In such an era, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "til death us do part" seriously and have successfully demonstrated the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity, to build a strong family. These qualities make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor William and Stella Lettman who on February 14 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The Lettman's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

IT FINALLY HAPPENED: FEDERAL DEBT BURDEN EXCEEDS \$5 TRILLION

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, on January 8, 1835, in the 58th year of our Republic, a distinguished native of North Carolina, Andrew Jackson, hosted a banquet to celebrate the Nation's deliverance from economic bondage. The national debt had been paid. There was cause for great celebration, because the payment of the national debt was considered to be a triumph of republican government.

President Jackson delivered the following toast: "The Payment of the Public Debt—Let us commemorate it as an event which gives us increased power as a nation, and reflects luster on our Federal Union, of whose justice, fidelity and wisdom it is a glorious illustration."

Fast-forward 161 years, Mr. President: Today it is my sad duty to report that on this past Friday, February 23, 1996, the Federal debt passed the \$5 trillion mark—a new world record. Never before in history had a nation encumbered itself with a debt so enormous.

The sheer arithmetic of the Federal debt is so immense that it boggles the mind. Consider these figures: As of the close of business this past Friday, February 23, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,017,056,630,040.53.

Let me run that by once more a bit more slowly—5 trillion, 17 billion, 56 million, 630 thousand, 40 dollars and 53 cents. The enormity becomes more clearly in focus when one bears in mind

that there are a million million dollars in a trillion—so the Federal debt of the United States has now passed five million million dollars.

Let's look back 23 years. The day I was first sworn in as a U.S. Senator, on January 3, 1973, the Federal debt stood at less than one-tenth of today's total Federal debt. On April 18, 1973, for example, the April 15 tax deadline had just passed; the taxpayers' money was flowing into the Internal Revenue Service; and the Federal debt stood at 455 billion, 570 million, 163 thousand, 323 dollars and 85 cents. I should add that the Federal budget deficit that year was about \$15 billion—one-tenth of the present Federal deficit.

Mr. President, one of the first pieces of legislation I offered in early 1973 was a resolution to require the Senate to balance the Federal budget. I did that several times in the weeks and months to follow. I lost every time. Then I offered a resolution stipulating that the salaries of Senators and Congressmen be reduced by the same percentage that Congress failed to balance the budget. As I recall, I got seven votes for that proposition and a lot of angry expressions.

Since then, the Federal debt has exploded tenfold.

I recently reviewed a publication entitled "Historical Tables of the Fiscal Year 1995 Budget." Guess what this document revealed about one significant aspect of the Federal debt. It showed that the interest on the money borrowed and spent by the Congress of the United States, over and above income, during the fiscal years 1973 through 1993, cost the American taxpayers \$3,006,417,000,000.00.

Three trillion dollars just to pay the interest on excessive spending authorized and appropriated by the Congress of the United States over a period of a couple of decades.

Just suppose Congress had agreed back in 1973 to discipline itself and hold fast to a balanced Federal budget. We would be on Easy Street today.

But, Mr. President, it is so easy to spend somebody else's money. As a result of all this Federal deficit spending, the share of every man, woman and child in America averages out to be roughly \$19,043. Every child born today will be taxed \$187,000 during his or her lifetime to pay just the interest on the Federal debt.

Think of what has been done to our children and grandchildren. The burden of a \$5 trillion debt is a weight on the shoulders of future generations, as well as on our economy today. The Federal Government annually spends approximately 15 percent of its budget paying the interest on the Federal Government's debt.

Last year the Federal Government spent approximately \$1.5 trillion, much of it entirely unnecessary, duplicative, or just plain wasteful. We must return fiscal sanity to the Federal Government and discard the foolish notion that all problems can be solved by

more intrusive Government programs and yet more spending. It's time, Mr. President, to make some hard choices. We can make the tough decisions now, or leave them for someone else to make later, when they'll be even tougher. The honorable, sensible policy is to cut spending and cut it now. Only when we reign in the out-of-control spending of the taxpayers' money can we, like President Andrew Jackson, who was born in Union County, NC, get about the business of returning the luster to our Federal Union which has become so dim.

Mr. BOND. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Chair now lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2546, the D.C. appropriations bill.

The Senate resumed consideration of the conference report.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I believe that under the present order there are 2 hours allowed on the bill. I have 1 hour of that time, is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time is equally divided until 12:30. So, yes, you have 1 hour.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Steve Greene, a fellow serving on the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, be extended the privilege of the floor during the consideration of the conference report on H.R. 2546.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I rise to present this conference report to the Senate today, at long last. It has been some 90 days that we have been trying to reach agreement. I hope my colleagues will listen very closely to what I have to say, and I hope very strongly that we will be able to pass this conference report. I do so with the confidence that this is the best compromise we can achieve at this time. It is important that we enact this bill and provide the D.C. city government with a remainder of the Federal payment and bring to an end the uncertainty about fiscal year 1996 appropriations. We are already partially through the year, and we still have not met our commitment to the city.

This bill contains some very important and long overdue educational reforms. However, it contains a couple of

provisions that were very contentious. I will explain those briefly. I think we have reached an accommodation on one. There is an abortion provision in there that says, "No funds, Federal or local, covered in this appropriations bill can be used for abortion, except to save the life of the mother or in cases of rape or incest."

Also, there is a provision which was not intended to be controversial—I want to clear that up—with respect to Davis-Bacon. There is no intention in this bill to waive the Davis-Bacon Act, except with respect to donated services to repair school facilities. I wanted to make it clear that they were not covered by the Davis-Bacon Act. It appears that in so doing, we perhaps created an interpretation that would say it also applied beyond what we intended. There is no intention to do that. So we will fix that at the appropriate time.

The controversial provision I am referring to is the portion that permits the use of taxpayer dollars to pay tuition vouchers at private and religious-affiliated schools. I urge you to pay close attention to what we have done here. The conference agreement allows for two different types of vouchers—one to be used for tuition, which is the controversial part. The other is to be used for after-school enrichment programs. Keep this latter one in mind. There is no controversy over this at all. There are some 20,000 D.C. students right now who are in need of remedial help. We have a 28-percent dropout rate in the city right now. We need to do something about that.

Also, as is true nationwide, about 50 percent of the kids who graduate from high school are functionally illiterate. I do not intend to allow that to continue. I do not think anybody in this body wants to do that. So we allow for the vouchers to be used—or scholarships, as some prefer to call them—to help the kids after school who are having remedial problems. However—and this is critical—in no case can any Federal funds be allocated for any voucher program until the D.C. Council approves of such expenditure. Schools participating in the voucher plan are required to comply with Federal civil rights laws. There is total local control here and no Federal mandate that they must be used.

This agreement reinforces the fundamental principle of local control and allows the D.C. Council to determine if vouchers are appropriate for the District of Columbia public schools and to determine the appropriate split between tuition vouchers and the non-controversial after-school vouchers.

Mr. President, I do not want to let the voucher piece overshadow the other educational provisions that are contained in the bill. The conference agreement includes a number of education initiatives designed to improve the public education and help all the children in the public schools in the District of Columbia by making it possible for them to compete in the future